

Craze for Feathered Gowns Booms Ostrich Farming



TAME OSTRICHES READY FOR PLUCKING ON A FLORIDA FARM.

Growth of the Enterprise in America Marks One of the Most Remarkable Phases of Plume Raising Industry

FASHIONABLE Paris recently was treated to a new sensation when Mile. Mistingnet, stage beauty and pioneer of original and startling modes, appeared at the Casino Theatre wearing a wonderful befeathered gown. She also wore a towering ostrich feathered toque and carried a gorgeous feathered fan to match. Paris pronounced the befeathered costume very chic, and what the gay French capital likes in the way of fashion for milady usually sooner or later becomes the world's vogue. So the women of France are now bedecking themselves with ostrich plumes and the fashion is rapidly spreading all over the world.

With the ostrich feather once more restored to favor there already has been a decided boom for the American capital invested in one of the most unusual industries, that of ostrich farming. The ostrich industry within a space of a little more than half a century has been extended from the original home of the most gigantic of birds, the wilds of Africa, to other countries having a suitable climate. But of additional interest to Americans is the fact that the United States within recent years has gradually become a rival in the industry to British, French and German Africa.

Millions in Imported Feathers.

The imports of ostrich feathers into this country alone since 1900 have aggregated nearly \$50,000,000 and were immediately prior to the war running at about \$6,000,000 per annum. In the closing years of the war the imports dropped to about one-tenth of that value, but in view of the most recent decree of Dame Fashion they are again rapidly on the ascent. In fact, during the

fiscal year of 1920 the value of the ostrich feathers imported was \$2,500,000, against a little more than \$500,000 in 1917 and \$750,000 in 1918. With this advance in demand and price the value of the 10,000 ostriches in the United States has correspondingly increased and now runs up into millions of dollars.

Africa and Southern Asia were apparently the original home of the bird, but he is now found wild in only the little frequented sections of Central Africa. The ease with which he could be domesticated, however, led to the establishment of large ostrich farms in British, French and German Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century, and their successes soon led to similar experiments in the United States and later in Australia and Argentina.

The first efforts to domesticate these birds, renowned for speed as well as beautiful plumes, was made in South Africa about 1804. It did not prove successful until three years later, but within the next twenty years the industry had grown to such proportions that \$40,000,000 had been invested in it, from which the annual income exceeded \$5,000,000. From 154,880 tame birds in South Africa in 1911, the number rose until it reached 257,970 in 1914.

Ostrich Farms in America.

In 1882 the United States determined to take a hand in the profitable game of ostrich raising, and in that year New York city was excited over the arrival of twenty-two specimens, which were imported from Cape Town. From New York city they were shipped to California, and now the business of ostrich farming is successfully carried on not only in that State but in Arizona, Arkansas, North Carolina and Florida.

South African interests at first looked askance at the action of the United States

MILE MISTINGNET FRENCH BEAUTY INHER GOWN OF OSTRICH PLUMES, WITH FAN and HAT of FEATHERS

and sought to prevent it by prohibiting the exportation of ostriches or their eggs. However, the original twenty-two birds multiplied so rapidly that the census of 1910 showed

5,361 ostriches in the United States, with a valuation of \$1,000,000. In 1918 the number was estimated at 8,000, and at the present time probably has reached 10,000 or 12,000,

since the industry has been extended even into other States than those already mentioned, including Texas and Alabama. The ostrich industry wherever established

OSTRICH FARMER COUNTING A HATCH

has proved financially attractive, the profits of the South African farms being reported as high as 40 per cent. on the invested capital, while the value of a single bird of the higher grade for breeding purposes has run as high as \$1,000.

The male ostrich is larger than the female and often measures seven feet in height, with a weight of upward of 200 pounds. The bird's plumage is strikingly loose, fluffy and deep black in color, only the "plumes" (quill feathers) of the wings and tail being white. The male assumes its mature plumage at the age of three years.

When the bird is six or seven months old it undergoes its first plucking. Thereafter at intervals of six months new crops of plumes may be gathered, and the ostrich ordinarily lives to see the ripe old age of eighty.

How the Birds Are Plucked.

The plucking is done by putting the ostrich into a V shaped corral just large enough to admit its body. One of the characteristics of the ostrich, with which almost every person is acquainted, is that of burying his head in the sand when frightened. The bird feels that while he cannot see no one in turn can see him and that therefore he is free from danger.

Because of this peculiar trait the process of plucking is made a great deal easier. A hood is placed over the head, whereupon the bird becomes extremely docile. The plucking causes the bird no pain. The plumes are not pulled out, but are cut. The dead stumps are removed after a few days. Each picking of a bird will yield from twenty to forty feathers of high grade.

A pair of ostriches will produce from ten to twenty chicks a year. At the age of six months the young ostrich is generally valued at about \$100. At the age of one year his value has increased to \$150, and when the bird is two years old the value has gone up to \$200. At three years the value ranges from \$350 to \$500, while at four a good bird for breeding purposes is often worth from \$700 to \$1,000.

A peculiar fact regarding the ostrich is that in its natural state both the male and the female take turns in incubating the eggs. A hollow in the earth is scooped out, whereupon a regular system of guarding the egg goes into effect. The male will generally take the nest at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon and remain on duty until about 9 o'clock the next morning, when he will be relieved by the female. The egg is about six inches long and weighs about three pounds, a new hatched ostrich being almost as large as a hen.

Running an ostrich farm involves no great difficulties. Cattle or sheep usually are raised in conjunction with the birds. A wire fence five feet high suffices to keep the birds in check, as they are not able to jump. What they lack in this respect, however, they make up in speed, and some of them can race over the ground at the rate of sixty miles an hour. In fact, for a limited distance, the ostrich can outspeed the fleetest of horses. The number of employees on a farm seldom exceeds thirty.

Africa still retains the lead in the ostrich industry. The value of the feathers exported from British South Africa alone runs as high as \$12,000,000 a year, and from Africa as a whole between \$15,000,000 and \$20,000,000 a year. Formerly a large share of the African product was sent from the colonies to the mother countries for redistribution, but at the present time most of our ostrich feathers imported are coming direct from British South Africa.

The application of modern methods has done much to increase production. No longer are the parent birds permitted to waste their time hatching the eggs or caring for the chicks, for the eggs are passed as fast as produced to big artificial incubators, and as a consequence the number of eggs produced by a given number of birds has doubled.

The choicest white plumes of the ostrich are the tips of the wings of the male bird, those of the tail are of slightly lower grade, while the more modest gray feathers of the female are marketed, but at a lower price.

Natural Thermometer

It was a wonderful sapphire, so it is said, that led the celebrated Dr. Sorby to the discovery of the nature of the liquid sometimes found enclosed in the cavities of crystals.

The gem in question contained a tube-shaped cavity, a quarter of an inch long and an eighteenth of an inch in diameter, which was so regular in its bore that it served, by means of the liquid partially filling it, for a thermometer. The contained liquid half filled the bore at 50 degrees Fahr. and completed filled it at 80 degrees. A study of the rate of expansion of the liquid led to the conclusion that it must be carbonic acid.

Tagliapietra Finds Secret of Ideal Voice in Lung Training

"TRAIN the lungs," is the specific for singing and talking voice its believed in by Tagliapietra, the veteran grand opera artist. This dean of barytones lives in New York and enjoys every opportunity he gets to talk on his favorite subject.

"A genial face appeared at the door of his studio the other day wreathed in the smile that has won him so many friends over the world, and making his visitor welcome in his resonant tones Tagliapietra said: 'This is the first and last time I will trouble you to pronounce the whole of my name. There seems to be no time for it in America, and very early in my forty-five years residence in your wonderful country it was reduced to 'Tag' for those who know me, and Tag it has remained.'"

With preconceived ideas of how a veteran ought to appear this one is disappointing to a youthful degree. The powerful physique, easy movements, keen intellect and wonderful voice unite in denial of the years accorded to him. When he was asked what was the secret of his robust health he replied: "To the full cultivation of my lungs. 'In early youth a Venetian doctor in the district of my birth prophesied I would leave this world by the gate denominated 'Tuberculosis.' The idea not appealing to me, I applied myself patiently to the training of that vital and greatly neglected division of human machinery."

Vocal Exercise Is Good for All.

"I never approved of the forcible physical training in vogue with athletes; too often seeing the muscles and biceps strengthened at the expense of weakening the heart and lungs, with early death or invalidism resulting, but working steadily at the vocal exercises I originated for myself I developed into a strong youth and a stronger manhood, attending school, graduating at the Venice Technical, later at the University of Padua as a naval architect, and, incidentally, at this period of my life escaping down a rope from the window of the college to join Garibaldi in 1866, and later being three years in the Italian army."

"Through it all I never neglected my prescribed course of lung training, and if every one would follow my good example they would insure the healthy development of the body, together with the speaking and singing voice, as Nature intended, which condition nine times out of ten is merely thwarted by pure neglect."

Asked if such training will have the tendency to prolong life the singer replied: "I do not hesitate to say a number of years can be added to the average life by fully cultivating the lungs. What is life but breath?"

"Following my simple instructions, asthma and its gruesome relations would be banished, and I can illustrate with no better example than myself, for after coming

Dean of Barytones Urges His Specific in Interest of Public Health as Well as Development of Pleasing Tones in Singing and Speaking

through an attack of the 'flu' last winter so severe it would have carried off an ordinary individual, you can see there are no ill traces left, and I can, with the same ease as ever, cover my vocal exercises of sixteen bars of music with one breath. Try it," he added, "for yourself."

Then Tagliapietra inquired vigorously: "Have you stopped to consider that breathing means continuous labor, that we must work every second to keep alive, pumping the air in and out like the bellows of an organ?"

"But the work is terribly neglected, and asking myself where lies the cause of this neglect I conclude it is with the Government, which imposes a tax on everything else, but having omitted lungs, the public regards them as a cheap article and passes them over."

Reminded he was more in the public mind as a singer than a trainer of lungs, Tagliapietra inquired: "Well, what is the first requisite of a singer but lungs?"

Train the Lungs for Speaking and Singing

"Every one born should train their lungs from the youngest to the oldest, and, unlike most things that are good for one, it is a pleasant occupation, consisting of certain vocal exercises, preferably with piano accompaniment, and resulting in many advantages. It perfects the musical ear, expands the chest tremendously and makes the speaking voice sweet, resonant, flexible and correct."

And the singing voice? "There is a close connection, but there are many persons who desire to take singing lessons without knowing if they have a voice to sing with, and by training the lungs you can soon distinguish for yourself if you are developing the gift."

"There is much charlatanry among vocal teachers who bring the fine profession into ill repute. There are many who do not know the A B C of the human voice, but impress the ignorant amateurs by teaching them a few simple songs, parrot-like, which will be the limit of their vocal career."

"The best teacher is he or she who, having acquired experience and success on the stage before that great master, the public, knows how to locate the tones of the voice and to illustrate how to produce those tones in the perfect, sure and dependable way."

In regard to a method to be adopted, the old singer said:

"There is no method in singing. Do the birds have a method? Yet even a Tetrastix can scarce compete with a little yellow canary in full trill."

"There are some professors, who, finding it required by their public, advertise a particular method. Randegger, who taught half London to sing, would order the pupil to re-

cline on a sofa, and on examining the throat would gravely touch the bell, whereupon a servant entered with a golden spoon, with which he would press down the tongue, saying, 'Sing 'Ah.' If they succeeded he would observe, 'Very good, indeed, I am sure you will make a great career.' No one exactly defined it, but this was spoken of as 'the Randegger method.'"

"Fanciulli, late of the Marine Band, after formally receiving his pupils, went through a process of punching, squeezing and pounding them, which, he explained, made the circulation lively and imparted warmth to the voice!"

"Lamperti would insert wooden sticks in each side of the pupil's mouth and so on, up to the present era, when those who have

never given singing lessons in their own countries, arrive here with all sorts of camouflage ideas for which they charge ten to twenty dollars a lesson to expound."

"Sending their children abroad to study nowadays is largely a fad," said Tagliapietra, "and frequently a dangerous fad when girls and boys are unaccompanied by their parents or guardians."

"The artistic atmosphere, it is true, is still limited in America, though developing, but if you give me a pupil with the makings of good lungs and voice, one willing to devote herself to study, I guarantee to bring out as fine an artist singer on this side the Atlantic as can come from the other."

"Do you believe in children and persons in general cultivating their speaking voices irrespective of singing?"

"By all means. First and foremost for the development of their lungs and consequent health and in order to correct certain disagreeable tones more or less accredited to Americans of the nasal order."

"If I may be pardoned, the speaking voice of the general American is lacking in some of the important and pleasing qualities—important because the perfect speaking voice indicates the lungs are developed and pleasing because it is rounded and musical in place of thin in quality, unmusical and nasal, also monotonous. You would not care to hear a person sing on one note, yet many persons talk on one note until the listener becomes oppressed by the monotony."

Where Work Wins.

"The working class, in a measure, meet requirements by their work, but the millionaires overloaded with the comforts of life and lapped in luxury, are apt to omit everything that savors of effort under the firm conviction that all things are within their purchasing control. But the sooner they realize that they cannot buy a whiff of breath—must, in fact, manufacture it themselves, must work for it—the longer will they be spared the result of a too late repentance."

Signor Tagliapietra in his desire to influence all who mould the youth of this nation talks to all on his favorite subject. He said: "I talked not long ago during a musical morning at which I sang at the Hotel Majestic with Admiral Bradley A. Fiske in connection with Annapolis. Admiral Fiske expressed himself as deeply interested in the development of the lungs as I explained to him, and through him I hope to bring the subject before the midshipmen. Incidentally Admiral Fiske made a souvenir remark which I most highly prize to the effect that prima donnas and tenors easily sustained their reputation with the public, but I happened to be the only barytone he recalled who has done so."

"I have only to impress upon you, for the sake of humanity, you cannot be too emphatic in urging the public to train their lungs, and by so doing they will live longer and happier, and, with due respect to the medical profession, shorten the doctor's bill. Train the lungs."



GIOVANNI TAGLIAPIETRA